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ABSTRACT

An examination of the coverage of Latin America during 1977 by "Newsweek," "Time," and "U.S. News and World Report" was undertaken to compare the number of stories and the amount of space devoted to that region with that afforded other areas of the world. The results showed that of the major areas of the world, only Canada and Australia received less coverage than did Latin America. Coverage of United States-oriented stories was predominant, with the Panama Canal issue dominating "Time" and "U.S. News" and U.S. diplomatic efforts in Cuba dominating the reporting of "Newsweek." Each newsmagazine chose a different approach to Latin America--"U.S. News" provided coverage of economic issues and a broad, if brief, view of the region; "Time," with the smallest number of Latin American stories, ran longer articles, with more indepth examination of nations and issues; while "Newsweek," with the largest number of stories, offered broader, general coverage concerned with United States-dominated issues such as economics and tourism. (Author/FL)

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OUR NEGLECTED NEIGHBORS: HOW THE U.S. NEWS MAGAZINES COVERED LATIN AMERICA IN 1977

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BACKGROUND

A new revolution has been declared -- against "communication imperialism." At international meetings from Costa Rica to New Delhi, third world nations have savagely attacked a communications imbalance "which perpetuates the colonial era of dependence and domination."[1]

Finally, after years of acrimonious argumentation, UNESCO last November adopted a declaration of principles concerning the use of the mass media, supporting a more balanced flow of news and a free gathering of information. The final declaration was a compromise version of the original Soviet-sponsored proposal to establish national news agencies which would control the dissemination of news from third world nations. But the very ambiguity of the proposal, "a masterful exercise in squaring the circle," according to a London journalist,[2] has ensured the continuation of the debate and the research on world patterns of news flow.

Studies concerned with the flow of information among nations have multiplied in the last two decades, and theoretical writings are flourishing in response to what the Journal of Communication called "The Great Debate" over the UNESCO resolution. These research studies have ranged from attempts to design global models of news flow to highly specific content analyses of a single newspaper's coverage of another nation.

Two major studies have traced or examined multi-national news flow. The first was the 1952 study by the International Press Institute, followed in recent years by a study by Gerbner and Marvanyi.[3,4] Both studies examined a number of world newspapers, and came to similar conclusions.

There is a perceived imbalance in the world coverage by the United States media, chiefly, an underrepresentation and stereotyping of the third world nations. In every study of international news flow, the result was the same: the most attention is paid to the U.S. and to Western Europe. South America is sadly unreported, even in the foreign news coverage of the Latin American media.[5] People just don't read what is happening is the less developed nations.

Media analysts have tried to formulate theories to explain why there is a lack of reader, or editor, interest in certain countries. Hicks and Gordon[6] suggested three factors which influence reader interest and the flow of news:

1. Physical distance between countries;
2. Nature of news events;
3. Political-economic dominance of certain countries.

The first reason, physical distance, seems to be invalid as far as the United States media are concerned, at least according to the study by Robinson and Sparkes, who finally concluded that "coverage of world regions in the U.S. press followed no predictable pattern."[7]

In the Robinson and Sparkes study, Mexico and Canada, the most proximate nations in terms of mileage, received scanty coverage. The data to be presented in this paper support the authors' findings.

Perhaps distance should be measured as more than the number of miles between capitals, for distance can be influenced strongly by perceived cultural, economic and emotional ties between two peoples. In a sense, England and Western Europe are "closer" to most Americans than the more "foreign" cultures of Latin America.[4] Sunwoo Nam wrote that physical

distance is not as important as "functional distance." Two nations involved in the same event will report each other's actions in spite of the geographical distance between them.[8]

Thus, when there are economic ties between North and South America, coverage increases somewhat. While no one is really concerned with a drought in Surinam, a frost in Brazil holds interest for U.S. coffee drinkers. Nations visited by a First Lady or a Secretary of State become "closer."

But even America's involvement in the Organization of American States did not ensure coverage of that organization; they once threatened to move from Washington in an attempt to boost media exposure. Venezuela's role as founder of OPEC has not made that nation of interest to the media in America.

The nature of the news event is a clearer indicator of the potential for publication in the U.S. media, but there is disagreement about what makes Latin America newsworthy. The hypothesis has always been that revolutions and disasters were the staple of Latin American news. A former Latin American bureau chief for the Associated Press complained that:

> Latin American news must fit certain preconceived notions of readers and editors before it has much chance of use. Earthquake stories are almost always used, as are other natural disasters, accidents and revolutions and coups. Then there's the 'dancing bear' type of human interest story which tickles the readers' fancies. They like to say, 'Oh, look how interesting and quaint these little brown-skinned people are.'[9]

Perhaps such a theory was true, but the results of this study suggest that there are other stories which are more popular right now, chiefly foreign relations articles. This topic will be discussed later in the paper.

Some researchers have blamed the gatekeeper for lack of adequate foreign coverage, especially of Latin America.One A.P. Latin American staffer complained that:

> Terrorism is over-emphasized. Yet, each day, I check first what terrorism has occurred in the country and push it if it seems at all noteworthy. I know that it will receive attention in New York. It is also a damn sight easier to write than, say, a story about education or agriculture problems.10

John Vilanilam put it more concisely: "It took pretty close to a revolution to bring a South American dateline."[11]

Other journalists have placed the blame on Americans, generally apathetic during a time when the nation is turning to internal problems.[12] U.P.I. vice president and editor Earl J. Johnson wrote in 1962 that "much news from Latin America is useful but not interesting, important but dull because there is this wide gap between the fact and the reader -- a lack of reader background."[13] Richard O'Mara, with the Baltimore Sun's now-defunct South American bureau, wrote rather bitterly that "ignorance in general is understandable. Latin America is just too big, too diverse, in a way too exotic for anyone to understand in its totality. The immensity of the intellectual challenge it poses can, by itself, put you off."[14]

But, lest anyone hope that such criticism spark more in-depth coverage of Latin America, one should recall an address given to the Pan-American Congress of Journalists, in which an American President said that "there was a time when readers of our newspapers here might have imagined revolutions and volcanic disturbances were the chief product of Latin Ameria. That day has passed."[15] The President? Calvin Coolidge,in 1928.

James Reston more recently commented, "The people of the United States will do anything for Latin America except read about it."[16]

The third factor suggested by Hicks and Gordon is rather self-explanatory -- the political and economic dominance of certain countries. Wilbur Schramm wrote that "clearly the world flow of foreign news deals chiefly with a group of highly developed countries which are also dominant in world politics."[17] Al Hester agreed that "it would seem a reasonable speculation that a greater volume of information will flow from powerful nations to weaker nations than from weak to powerful."[18] News flow studies have supported this almost intuitive idea that a nation which is powerful, whether that power be economic, political or military, is one which requires the surveillance of the media. Thus, Southeast Asia, the Arab block of oil exporters and the Soviet Union could be expected to have played a dominant role in the United States media in the last decade.

McNelley wrote that the media "presents a fragmented and synthetic image of the world. It highlights its own set of significant realities from its own social and cultural vantage point." The emphasis is on "method rather than substance and the tension-arousing rather than mutually acceptable or even neutral aspects of events. . .our vantage point appears to be that of a grim holding operation based on remnants of the established order, preoccupied with the mechanics of a fascinating -- if deadly -- game of power and using the scorecard for an agenda."[19]

The rhetoric of news flow theory has flown fast and furious, but Latin America has been curiously neglected as a research area. Every decade or so, a spate of articles will appear castigating the media's neglect of the area from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn, often coinciding with a renewed governmental interest in the Southern Hemisphere.

In 1962, the Presidential Task Force on Latin America reported that

> The quality of news coverage of Latin American affairs in important sectors of the United States press has reached a point of grave concern to friends of Latin America. It is also becoming dangerous. Unreliable reporting, failure to report adequately, and slanted news complicate United States relations with Latin American governments and aggrevate their problems, especially as the Cold War there threatens. 20

Such allegations have very often been made without research to support the charges. Even the comprehensive study by Gerbner and Marvanyi examined what was designed to be a world-wide study of news flow. The report included 60 newspapers, but not one was from Latin America.[21]

Three major studies on Latin America have revealed an apparent imbalance in the flow of news between the hemispheres. James Markham[22] in 1961 found that South American papers devoted between 27.9% and 41.3% of their news hole to U.S. news, but the United States papers only gave Latin America a 4.3% share.

Markham summarized this situation as "a puzzling fact that belies not only the vast amount of dollar investment this country has in Central and South America, but also the strategic importance to the United States of the South American republics in the world power struggle."[23]

Ten years after Markham's study, Al Hester[24] examined the flow of news through the Associated Press wires. Hester reported that the news from Latin America had increased with the introduction of communication satellites, but that gatekeepers still perceived a lack of reader interest in South America. Latin America, Hester found, was a generally neglected area of the world, and most items which were printed concerned crime and criminals, in accord with the editors' perceptions that the greatest reader interest was in disasters, revolutions, coups, and stories with strong United States tie-ins.

John Whitaker[25] in 1969 reported the results of his study of Latin American stories in ten general circulation magazines over a ten year period. The magazines included Life and Look, two "general interest" publications (Reader's Digest and Saturday Evening Post) five women's magazines, and stories about Latin America in Time, except for those Whitaker classified as "hard news." He found a general lack of interest in Latin America (except from the tourist viewpoint), as well as:

> ...the tendency (unconscious, it is to be hoped, in most cases) to adopt a patronizing attitude toward persons, places, and things in Latin America. At one and the same time they exaggerate the evils and dangers of life in those countries, while underrating the compensatory aspects of the land, the people, their accomplishments and their aspirations. 26

But Whitaker was concerned with the background and feature stories in American magazines, not with general news coverage. In fact, Time was included in Whitaker's study "not so much for the purpose of direct comparison, but to furnish a basis for measuring performance of the other magazines, much in the same way the New York Times is frequently used as a criterion in assessing characteristics of other newspapers."[27]

In general, researchers concerned with news flow patterns have stressed newspapers and, on rare occasions, television. News magazines have been almost completely neglected as an area of study. Yet, in 1977 Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report boasted a combined circulation of 9.29 million weekly.

With their magazine format, these publications could also be expected to devote more space to important foreign events, more analysis and in-depth reporting. Also, if one critical issue in news flow debates is the potential impact of the media as agenda setters upon individuals who decide policy,

then the news magazines are particularly important. These magazines run longer stories than most newspapers, and are, in addition, a national medium. While they are not the principal source of news for most people, they are a pervasive medium and an important one.[28]

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was designed to analyze the coverage of foreign events in the three news magazines, Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report, for 1977. That year was chosen since it is recent, and had a limited number of overwhelming national events, such as a Presidential election or a Bicentennial, which would have reduced the amount of space available for foreign news coverage.

Every copy of Time, Newsweek and U.S. News was coded to tabulate the following:

1. The amount of foreign news in each issue, expressed in square inches (length x column width);
2. The proportion of coverage for specific world regions:

   Western Europe
   East Europe and the U.S.S.R.
   The Middle East, including the Mediterranean area
   Africa
   Asia
   Latin America
   Canada
   Australia and New Zealand
   Other (including Bermuda, Antarctica, Greenland)

3. The type of news originating from Latin America

4. The country of origin for Latin American news

Foreign news was defined as news, pictures, opinions or reports about a foreign country, carrying a foreign dateline or clearly originating in a foreign nation. Stories with a domestic dateline that clearly concerned a foreign nation, and not just the U.S. relationship with that nation, were considered foreign news. For example, a story only concerning Turkish agricultural developments was considered foreign news, even if the story originated in New York. However, a visit of Margaret Trudeau to a New York disco, written from New York City, or a Washington meeting on SALT talks, was not considered foreign news.

News originating from or concerning several nations was classified under the nation which dominated the story. News originating from an organization such as the United Nations or NATO, or concerning a multi-national body or organization, such as OPEC, was coded under a special category of "international."

Reports from a South American or Caribbean nation were all considered Latin American news with one exception. Because of the intense U.S. interest in the Canal treaty, Panama was an anomaly for Latin America: a country with a great deal of media attention. Since most of the attention reflected U.S. diplomatic involvement there, a special category was developed for stories concerning Panama. Stories which originated in Washington concerning the U.S. Congress attitude toward the treaty or towards Panama were not considered foreign news.

Latin American and Panamanian stories were coded as to country and subject category. If the article concerned more than one Latin nation, or

the area in general, the story was listed as "Latin America," rather than by an individual nation. This use of "Latin America" applies only to the breakdown by nation section.

The subjects were coded into categories adopted from those used by Weaver and Mullins [29] The abbreviated definitions follow:

Accidents, disasters:	natural disasters, transportation accidents, individual injury, death, etc.
War and violence:	armed conflict as military operations and not as issues in foreign relations. Includes terrorism, coups, etc.
Crime and vice:	illegal or criminal activity which is not committed as part of political or terrorist activity .
Foreign relations:	diplomatic relations between nations, including human rights as a diplomatic issue, visits by state figures.
Defense:	defense forces of a nation, including occupation forces abroad which are not engaged in combat.
Politics:	domestic politics of a nation, excluding violence or terrorist activites. Includes censorship and political oppression.
Culture:	fine arts and entertainment, and individuals in the news because of a connection with these industries.
Economic, business:	business, industry, commerce, finance and trade, trade unions, cost-of-living, economic and business relations with other nations.
Human interest:	oddities in nature and human temperament, personalities and celebrities not in entertainment, sports, or other categories.
Education, science, technology	education programs, literacy, natural and social sciences, inventions, innovations, health.

Judicial and legal:	interpretations by courts, civil suits, laws, but not cases which could be considered under the categories of crime or war and violence.
Social measures:	welfare or other actions carried out by organizations, churches or multinational groups.
Sports:	any aspect of organized sports except for crime and corruption.
Religion:	churches, religious leaders, sects, cults, mystic practices, whether ancient or modern.
Miscellaneous:	last ditch category when article fits absolutely none of the other categories.
Quality of life:	general view of life styles and quality of living, including prison or housing conditions.
In-depth:	a generally lengthy article which covered many aspects of a nation.
Tourism:	measures taken to attract and provide for tourists, as well as problems and suggestions for tourists.

Since every issue was coded, and every article in each issue, there was no sampling technique. Therefore, since this was census data designed to include every foreign news story in the three magazines for 1977, there is no appropriate test for "significance" or "meaningfullness." Nor is such a test necessary; the findings are complete for 1977 and no attempt is made to project their validity for any other year. These figures reflect what the news magazines actually did during 1977. Any difference in totals or means is -- it is to be hoped -- precise, not an estimate.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

If one accepts the view of the news magazines, not much was happening south of the Rio Grande in 1977. Of the major areas of the world, only Canada and Australia were less in the news than Latin America.

Even disasters were not news. Despite the theories of Calvin Coolidge and others, accidents, disasters and their like were only a very small percentage of Latin American news.

American-oriented issues were important for magazine gatekeepers; Panama dominated Time and U.S. News Latin coverage, while American diplomatic efforts in Cuba was the most frequent topic for Newsweek.

Readers of news magazines had a choice of approaches to Latin America. For economic news and a broad, if brief, view of Latin America, U.S. News was the choice. Time, with the smallest number of Latin stories, ran longer articles, with more in-depth examination of nations and issues. Newsweek offered a broader, general coverage, concerned with American-related issues, including economics and tourism.

Time and U.S. News were in close accord as to the relative importance of Latin nations, in terms of the number of stories devoted to each country. Time and Newsweek were similar in the attention given to each world area.

Western Europe, as might have been expected, dominated all three magazines, both in terms of the number of stories and the total length. However, stories on Western Europe were shorter than the mean length of all foreign articles, while African and Middle Eastern stories were longer than the mean. Time's Latin American stories were unusually long, but in the other magazines, Latin articles were shorter than the average foreign story.

U.S. News ran the greatest number of foreign news stories, but they were also the shortest. Overall, the magazines ran almost the same amount

of foreign news. Time ran the most (approximately 38,997 square inches*) followed by Newsweek (38,041 sq.in.) and U.S. News (36,577 sq.in.).

U.S. News ran the greatest amount of news about Latin America and Panama (3090 sq.in. for Latin America, plus 914 for Panama), while Time ran the smallest (Latin America: 2144 sq.in.; Panama: 106 sq.in.) Newsweek was in the middle with 2584 sq.in. on Latin America and 686 sq. in. on Panama.

In summary, the three magazines displayed some similarities in their approaches to Latin American news. Their differences will be discussed at length in the following sections.

NUMBER OF STORIES

U.S. News ran the largest number of stories on Latin America -- 97, or 11.8% of the magazine's total foreign coverage, plus 15 stories on Panama (1.8%). Newsweek was next, with 52 Latin reports (7.9%) and 7 Panamanian (1.1%) and Time trailed with 29 stories on Latin America (4.9%) and 3 on Panama (0.5%).

Time and Newsweek viewed the relative importance of world areas similarly. They wrote most often about Western Europe, followed by the 1977 trouble spots: the Middle East, Africa, Asia, then Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R., and, finally Latin America and Canada. (Although Panama is ranked at nearly the bottom of every list, it should be noted that this is a single country, compared with larger world areas. Were the Panamanian coverage included in the Latin American category, it would place the Latin

*Figures throughout are approximate because of rounding errors.

coverage much higher on the list.)

U.S. News, with its interest in business and economics displayed different areas of emphasis from the other magazines. Western Europe was the most often mentioned, but from that point the U.S. News list diverged: Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. was the second most frequently mentioned area, followed by Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and, trailing as always, Canada.

INSERT TABLE A

The dominance of Western Europe was especially noticeable in Time, where it made up 38.9% of the foreign stories. Precisely one-third of the Newsweek articles, and 24.5% of the U.S. News reports concerned Western Europe.

U.S. News paid special attention to short articles on Eastern Europe, 19.0% of its total, but these were often speculative tidbits about Brezhnev's health or the Byzantine political machinations within the Kremlin. The other magazines mentioned the Communist bloc nations less frequently: 9.2% for Time and 8.3% for Newsweek.

TOTAL LENGTH

The magazines were alike in terms of total space given foreign news. Time ran the most (38,997 sq.in.) followed by Newsweek (38,041 sq.in.) and U.S. News (36,577 sq.in.).

In terms of the space devoted to each world area, the situation was much the same as for the number of stories. The ranking of world areas

was identical in Time and Newsweek, and was a duplicate of that list by the number of stories: Western Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia, East Europe, Latin America, Canada.

For U.S. News, Latin America slipped a few notches. While the stories on the southern hemisphere were frequent, they were also short. U.S. News devoted the greatest amount of space to Western Europe, then the Middle East, East Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and Canada.

INSERT TABLE B

While Time ran the most foreign news, it ran the least Latin American news, with 2144 sq.in. (5.5% of the total foreign coverage) on Latin America and 106 sq. in. (0.3%) on Panama. U.S. News ran the greatest amount of the magazines, 3090 sq.in. (8.4%) on Latin America and 914 sq.in. (2.5%) on Panama. Newsweek was in the middle, with 2584 sq.in. (6.8%) on Latin America plus 686 sq.in. (1.8%) for Panama.

Time devoted six times the space given to Latin America on Western Europe.

MEAN LENGTH

The longest foreign stories, in general, were in Time, where the mean length of a foreign article was 66.6 sq.in., or nearly a full page. Newsweek's average story was a bit shorter, 57.7 sq.in., and in U.S. News the mean was 44.7 sq.in.

INSERT TABLE C

Stories about Africa and the Middle East were longer than the average foreign story in all three magazines, and in Time, the mean length for all third world areas was longer than the overall average:

	Time	Newsweek	U.S. News
Overall mean	66.6 sq.in.	57.7	44.7
Africa	95.4	68.5	61.1
Middle East	87.9	81.1	76.3
Asia	67.4	50.7	39.6
Latin America	73.9	49.7	31.9

While Time may have trailed the other publications in the total space for Latin America and in the number of stories, the Latin articles they did run were the longest, on the average,of all three magazines.

Time's Latin American stories averaged 73.9 sq.in., while Newsweek's (49.7 sq.in.) and U.S. News'(31.9 sq.in.) were considerably shorter than the mean length of their foreign articles.

LATIN AMERICAN AND PANAMANIAN COVERAGE BY COUNTRY

A few nations dominated the magazines in 1977. Together, Panama, Mexico, Cuba and stories about Latin America in general accounted for more than three-fourths of the space the three magazines allocated to South American coverage. No other single nation received more than 5% of the space. Panama led the list with 25% of the space, followed by Mexico (20.1%), Cuba (16.2%) and general Latin stories (15.9%).

The magazines were more diversified when it came to the number of stories for each nation. Cuba led the list with 40 articles (19.7% of the total), with a tie for second place between Panama and Argentina with 27 stories each (13.3%), followed by Latin America in general in 26 (12.8%). Mexico was the topic 20 times (9.9%) and Brazil 19 times (9.4%).

The major difference in the lists of nations which received the most mentions versus those which received the most space can be accounted for by the popularity of very short articles, chiefly about Argentina and Brazil. The mean length for all Argentinian stories was 16.2 sq.in. and for Brazil it was 17.4 sq.in. In contrast, Cuban stories averaged 38.95 sq.in. and Mexican 96.6 sq.in. The short business briefs in U.S. News were a major factor in this difference.

The individual magazines stressed different nations during 1977, although Time and U.S. News allocated a similar proportion of space to certain popular nations.

INSERT TABLE D

Newsweek was especially fascinated with Cuba, devoting 22.5% of its Latin space to that nation. The major topic of these Cuban stories was the resumption of diplomatic ties with the U.S., and the subsequent visits of U.S. Congressmen and a South Dakota basketball team. Newsweek was also interested in the revival of Cuba as a tourist resort.

A close runner-up in Newsweek's allocation of space was Panama with 21.7% of the Latin space, followed by Mexico with 20.4%. Stories on Latin America in general were popular (10.9%) and a few articles reported the political unrest in Jamaica (5.4%). Other Latin countries were mentioned, but none accounted for more than 3.5% of the total coverage. Even with the continuing oil crisis, Venezuela, the founder of OPEC, was not mentioned during 1977 in Newsweek. Moreover, a price-setting meeting of OPEC nations was held in Caracas in December; as of the last issue of 1977, Newsweek had not mentioned the meeting.

If the Time and U.S. News stories were ranked according to the proportionate amount of space per country, the lists would be strikingly similar:

TIME		U.S. NEWS	
34.7%	Panama	22.4%	Panama
21.5%	Mexico	19.0%	Mexico
19.6%	Latin America	17.8%	Latin America
9.9	Cuba	14.5%	Cuba
8.4%	Argentina	6.2%	Brazil

The percentage of space Time gave Panama was greater than that given by U.S. News, but the order of priority was identical until the magazines split over the comparative importance of Argentina and Brazil.

Even Time and U.S. News disagreed when it came to the number of stories per nation. Time, which ran fewer Latin American stories but did run longer ones, covered Latin America in general most often (9 times for 28.1% of total) even though more than one-third of its Latin space went to Panama. Time ran stories on Argentina, Cuba and Panama 4 times each (12.5% each) and on Mexico 3 times (9.4%). Peru was the topic twice (6.3%), but no other nation was the subject more than once.

U.S. News ran nearly four times as many stories on Latin America as Time, and the list of most frequently mentioned nations differed from Time's. Cuba was U.S. News' most popular nation with 19 articles (17.0% of the total), followed by Argentina (18 times, 16.1%), then Brazil, Panama and Latin America in general with 15 stories each (13.4%).

Cuba also led the field for Newsweek, which ran 17 articles on that island (28.8%), more than twice the number of the runner-up, Panama with 8 mentions (13.6%). Mexico was the topic for 7 stories (11.9%), and Argentina and the Caribbean 5 articles each (8.5%).

TOPICS COVERED

At least for the 1977 news magazines, Coolidge and other theorists were wrong. Neither war nor disaster inspired magazine coverage of Latin America. Accidents and disasters, in fact, accounted for no more than 2.5% of any magazine's space, and were never mentioned at all in U.S. News. (Such disasters did occur, however, and will be discussed in the next section.)

What were the magazines interested in? In terms of both space and frequency of coverage, U.S.-oriented issues dominated the news: the canal, foreign relations and economics.

Four issues filled over 70% of the three magazines' total Latin space — the Panama Canal (25.7% of total), foreign relations (21.0%) and economics and business (12.5%). Because of the great length, if not frequency, of these articles, in-depth stories ranked fourth (11.2%).

Social action programs as a category was totally ignored by the news magazines.

In terms of space, Newsweek emphasized foreign relations (30.4%), especially between the U.S. and Cuba, while Time (34.8%) and U.S. News (22.6%) gave the greatest amount of space to the Panama Canal issue.

For Newsweek, the Canal was second to foreign relations, with tourism, largely in Mexico and Cuba, third (18.1%) and economic issues far behind (7.6%). Quality of life was fifth (6.4%). Newsweek did not cover four topics: education and science; judicial and legal; social, and sports.

The Canal received most of Time's space (34.8%), but, reflecting its penchant for longer stories, that magazine devoted almost one-fourth of its Latin news hole to in-depth articles. But other topics were more scattered, and no other subject made up more than 9% of Time's coverage. Politics was a poor third (8.4%) and foreign relations (8.0%) and economics (4.9%) trailed. Nine topics were not mentioned by Time: crime; defense; culture; education and science; judicial and legal; social; sports; miscellaneous and tourism.

The Canal occupied most of U.S. News' Latin space (22.6%), with foreign relations (20.8%) and economics (20.2%) extremely close. In-depth stories were popular (13.2%) and politics made a modest showing (8.7%). Three topics were left out from U.S. News: accidents; crime, and social.

A single category overlapped the list of omissions for all three magazines: social measures.

U.S. News covered the greatest number of topics, 16, compared with Newsweek's 14 and Time's 10.

The most frequently mentioned topics were also those with strong interest to U.S. readers. For every 10 stories the magazines devoted to Latin America, 6 of those stories concerned foreign relations, economics,

or the Panama Canal. Foreign relations was the topic of 50 stories (24.6% of total); economics was the topic of 43 (21.2%) and the canal the topic of 29 (14.3%).

The most frequent topic for U.S. News was economic and business news, an appropriate subject for that journal, with 34 articles (30.4% of the total). Foreign relations followed, with 30 stories (26.8%) then the canal, 17 times (15.2%).

Foreign relations was the most frequent topic for Newsweek, which ran 17 articles on that subject (28.8%). The magazine ran half that number on the canal (8 times, 13.6%), 6 on the quality of life (10.2%) and 5 each on human interest and economics stories (8.5%).

No topic really dominated Time in terms of number of articles. The most frequent topic was a tie between human interest and war and violence, with 6 articles each (18.8%), followed by economics and the canal, with 4 each (12.5%).

While the magazines as a composite showed strong interest in U.S. issues such as diplomacy and economics, the journals did show a great deal of individuality on choice of subject matter.

SUMMARY

What does it all mean? Latin America appeared at the bottom of the list in world coverage by the news magazines, but that may be simply a reflection of reader interest. Newspapers and magazines have no responsibility to report world events as communication theorists would have them reported.

Media critic Michael Arlen argued that lack of perceived reader interest is no excuse:

> Admittedly, it used to be a truism that the public wasn't 'interested' in South America, and doubtless that's still so to a considerable degree. Neither was the public 'interested' in Europe in the early 1930s, or in Southeast Asia in the middle 1960s, or in the complexities of the Arab world for much of this century. 30

Did the news media, especially the news magazines, miss important, or potentially important, events in Latin America during 1977? If one peruses the Yearbook for the Encyclopedia Britannica, then a picture of Latin America emerges that is quite different from that presented by the news magazines. Besides the economic conferences and agreements on coffee prices, a number of events never appeared in the magazines. A sample:[31]

-- A price-setting ministerial meeting of OPEC nations was scheduled for Caracas in December of 1977.

-- In January, the Argentine government reported that the cost of living rose by 347.5% in 1976. Throughout the year, the government attempted to control the runaway inflation.

-- A general strike in Colombia -- a nation no magazine mentioned -- resulted in 18 deaths and a governmental reorganization as 11 cabinet ministers resigned.

-- Disasters abounded. An Aeroflot jetliner en route from Moscow crashed in Havana, killing 66; in January, floods in Brazil killed 60; a major earthquake rocked Argentina, a yellow fever epidemic hit Peru, and a mine explosion in Columbia was fatal for 135.

-- After crackdowns in 1976 against them failed, Sandinista guerillas in Nicaragua launched a major offensive with the avowed aim of overthrowing the Somoza regime. Time and Newsweek that year ran one article, of average length, about Nicaragua. U.S. News ran none.

Only the editors of the magazines could judge whether these stories were justifiably ignored when the massive volume of incoming world news is considered.

But, putting value judgements aside, this study does show that for the U.S. news magazines, the area from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn is a poor news source.

TABLE A

NUMBER OF STORIES
BY WORLD AREA

	NEWSWEEK		TIME		U.S. NEWS		ALL MAGAZINES	
	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
Latin America	52	7.9	29	4.9	97	11.8	178	8.6
Panama	7	1.1	3	0.5	15	1.8	25	1.2
Western Europe	220	33.3	228	38.9	201	24.5	649	31.4
Eastern Europe/USSR	55	8.3	54	9.2	156	19.0	265	12.8
Mid East	108	16.4	89	15.2	80	9.8	277	13.4
Africa	92	13.9	77	13.1	57	7.0	226	10.9
Asia	88	13.3	75	12.8	143	17.5	306	14.8
Canada	19	2.9	9	1.5	39	4.8	67	3.2
Australia	1	0.2	5	0.8	4	0.5	10	0.5
Other	3	0.5	-	-	1	0.1	4	0.2
International	15	2.3	17	2.9	26	3.2	58	2.8
TOTALS:	660	100.1[a]	586	99.8[a]	819	100.0	2065	99.8[a]

[a]rounding error

TABLE B

TOTAL LENGTH OF COVERAGE BY WORLD AREA

	NEWSWEEK		TIME		U.S. NEWS		ALL MAGAZINES	
	Square Inches	% of Total	Square Inches	% of Total	Square Inches	% of Total	Square Inches	% of Total
Latin America	2584	6.8	2144	5.5	3090	8.4	7818	6.9
Panama	686	1.8	106	0.3	914	2.5	1706	1.5
Western Europe	10760	28.3	11899	30.5	8522	23.3	31181	27.4
East Europe/USSR	2761	7.3	2930	7.5	5866	16.0	11557	10.2
Mid East	8753	23.0	7823	20.1	6104	16.7	22680	20.0
Africa	6302	16.6	7346	18.8	3511	9.6	17159	15.1
Asia	4462	11.7	5055	13.0	5663	15.5	15180	13.4
Canada	889	2.3	346	0.9	811	2.2	2046	1.8
Australian	10	0.03	98	0.3	76	0.2	184	0.2
Other	198	0.5	--	-	504[a]	1.4	702	0.5
International	636	1.7	1250	3.2	1516	4.2	3402	3.0
TOTALS:	38041	100.03[b]	38997	100.1[b]	36577	100.0	113615	100.0

[a]Figure may be misleading since it reflects a single, lengthy article.

[b]Rounding error

TABLE C

MEAN LENGTH (IN SQ. IN.)
BY WORLD AREA

	Newsweek	Time	U.S. News
Latin America	49.7	73.9	31.9
Panama	98.1	35.3	60.9
Western Europe	49.1	52.2	42.4
East Europe/USSR	50.2	54.3	37.6
Mid East	81.1	87.9	76.3
Africa	68.5	95.4	61.6
Asia	50.7	67.4	39.6
Canada	46.8	38.3	20.8
Australia	10.0	19.6	19.0
International	42.4	73.5	58.3
Other	66.0	-	504.0[1]
Overall Mean	57.7	66.6	44.7

[1] A misleading figure, since it reflects only one, very long, story

TABLE D

COUNTRIES COVERED — BY LENGTH OF ARTICLES

	Newsweek			Time			U.S. News			All Magazines		
	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space
Argentina	5	17.4	2.7	4	47.3	8.4	18	9.0	3.9	27	16.2	4.6
Bolivia	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	36.5	1.8	2	36.5	0.8
Brazil	3	25.0	2.3	1	3.0	0.1	15	16.9	6.2	19	17.4	3.4
Chile	2	33.0	2.0	-	-	-	1	1.0	0.02	3	22.3	0.7
Colombia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Costa Rica	1	60.0	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	60.0	0.6
Cuba	17	43.4	22.5	4	56.3	9.9	19	31.4	14.5	40	38.9	16.2
Dominican Rep.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equador	2	5.0	0.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5.0	0.1
El Salvador	-	-	-	1	6.0	0.3	-	-	-	1	6.0	0.06
Guatamala	2	56.5	3.5	1	17.0	0.8	-	-	-	3	43.3	1.4
Guyana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Haiti	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.0	0.1	4	4.0	0.04
Honduras	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jamaica	3	58.3	5.4	1	5.0	0.2	2	12.0	0.6	6	34.0	2.1
Mexico	7	95.4	20.4	3	161.3	21.5	10	78.0	19.0	20	96.6	20.1
Nicaragua	1	63.1	1.9	1	42.0	1.9	-	-	-	2	52.5	1.1
Panama	8	88.8	21.7	4	195.0	34.7	15	61.4	22.4	27	89.3	25.0
Paraguay	1	68.0	2.1	-	-	-	1	4.0	0.1	2	36.0	0.7
Peru	-	-	-	2	6.0	0.5	1	18.0	0.4	3	10.0	0.3
Surinam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uruguay	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.0	0.1	1	4.0	0.04
Venezuela	-	-	-	1	45.0	2.0	4	49.8	4.8	5	48.8	2.5
Caribbean	5	16.4	2.5	-	-	-	2	49.0	2.4	7	25.7	1.9
Central America	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	28.0	0.7	1	28.0	0.3
Latin America	2	178.5	10.9	9	49.0	19.6	15	48.7	17.8	26	58.8	15.9
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	144.0	3.5	1	144.0	1.5
Argentina & Brazil	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	22.3	1.6	3	22.3	0.7

TABLE E

TOPICS COVERED -- BY LENGTH OF ARTICLES

Topics	Newsweek			Time			U.S. News			All Magazines		
	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space	n	$\bar{X}$	% of Total Space
Accidents, disasters	2	39.0	2.4	1	17.0	0.7	-	-	-	3	31.7	1.0
War	3	37.0	3.4	6	23.5	6.3	6	18.5	2.7	15	24.2	3.8
Crime	1	60.0	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	60.0	0.6
Foreign Relations	17	58.4	30.4	3	60.0	8.0	30	28.4	20.8	50	40.5	21.0
Defense	1	4.0	0.1	-	-	-	1	18.0	0.4	2	11.0	0.2
Politics	3	29.0	2.7	3	62.7	8.4	5	71.6	8.7	11	57.5	6.6
Culture	3	13.0	1.2	-	-	-	1	10.0	0.2	4	12.3	0.5
Economics	5	50.6	7.6	4	29.5	4.9	34	24.4	20.2	43	27.9	12.5
Human Interest	5	12.8	1.9	6	25.3	6.8	3	37.3	2.7	14	23.4	3.4
Education, science	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	7.0	0.2	1	7.0	0.07
Judicial, legal	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7.5	0.4	2	7.5	0.2
Social	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sports	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.0	0.1	1	4.0	0.04
Religion	1	5.0	0.2	2	33.0	2.9	1	39.0	1.0	4	27.5	1.1
Miscellaneous	1	11.0	0.3	-	-	-	1	26.0	0.6	2	18.5	0.4
Canal	8	95.6	23.4	4	195.0	34.8	17	54.5	22.6	29	85.2	25.7
Quality of life	6	35.0	6.4	1	68.0	3.0	6	42.2	6.2	13	40.8	5.5
In-depth	-	-	-	2	270.0	23.8	3	180.7	13.2	5	216.4	11.2
Tourism	3	197.0	18.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	197.0	6.1

ENDNOTES

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